



# IMPACT OF HOSTEL LIFE ON WORKING WOMEN: AN OVERVIEW

**Ms. MANJU S. SANADI**

Research Scholar

Dept. of Sociology

Rani Channamma University, Belagavi.

Karnataka. India.

Corresponding Author:

**Dr. SUMANTH S. HIREMATH**

Assistant Professor

Dept. of Sociology

Rani Channamma University, Belagavi.

Karnataka. India.

## ABSTRACT:

Women in India are finding wide range of job opportunities and the number of working women is rising in almost all the fields. They are leaving their homes due to jobs at different cities. One of the main difficulties faced by them is lack of safe and conveniently located lodging. And they have to find out accommodation in a town or city unknown to them and the safest place for them to stay seem to be the 'Working Women's Hostels' (WWHs), as WWHs are more secure than other available accommodation options. The study examines the perceptions of working women about their hostel life. It also reflects on the positive and negative impacts of hostel life on them.

**Keywords:** *Women, jobs, accommodation, safe, WWHs.*

## INTRODUCTION:

In today's era women have marked their presence in almost every area. Each workplace has its own number of women working in their organisation and every educational institution has majority number of girl students. It is estimated that about 54 per cent of the women are employed globally and almost 60 per cent of the female students study in various schools, colleges and universities worldwide.

Working women not only benefit their family with increased income but also, they are highly productive, innovative and punctual in their concerned field as compared to their opposite gender. Women workers are highly important in contributing to the world economic escalation. Yet, this growth of women does face some challenges, especially for those women who migrate to other major urban setting for their work. They face many challenges as soon as they arrive, accommodation being the foremost problem for every woman who shifts from one place to another for work. Easily available option for accommodation is either hostel or being a paying guest. Women staying in hostel have their own pros and cons. Ladies hostel has increasingly become the need of every working woman. Well is it necessary? What is the advantage of ladies hostel? Are there any cons? A superlative question everyone has in mind. The answer is simply YES!

### CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK:

- **Hostel:**

In no country is there a clear or agreed definition of a homeless hostel and that it is difficult to distinguish hostel dwellers from homeless people living in other types of temporary accommodation. In line with conceptual model of defining homelessness as exclusion from the physical, legal and social domain, they propose the following characteristics of "homeless accommodation" (Edgar & Meert, 2005, p. 22). An inexpensive lodging option for individuals and groups, with separate rooms for men and women, kitchens for guest use, a common room, and private storage options (Hosteling International, 2011).

- **Working Women:**

The term 'Working Women' as defined by Anjana Maitra Sinha in her study 'Women in a Changing Society', is "the women who works outside the home for a wage or salary". A woman who works for a living or who works in exchange for payment, especially one that does manual labor.

Working women, who may be single, widowed, divorced, separated, married but whose husband or immediate family does not reside in the same city/area are entitled to hostel facility.

### METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY:

The purpose of this study was to determine working women knowledge of hostels, their readiness to stay in a hostel, and factors that influence their intention. Study on hostels and hostelites have been focused around accessible hostels and on women already staying in hostel. However, not much research has been done in the past of the hostel inmates. The study will help in enhanced knowledge of how working women view hostels and provide an insight into this

area. Such an assessment about hostel and women is rarely found anywhere and there is a need for such effort. The following research questions were used in this study: Are working women aware of hostels? What is working women's willingness to stay in a hostel? What reasons led them to choose hostel and the impact of hostel life on them? What factors of hostel influence their personality? Are working women comfortable with the hostel facility/life? This research will try to answer the above mentioned questions and attempts to increase hostel knowledge to common citizens.

This paper is part of the *researcher's doctoral thesis* titled "*Women Hostelities: A Sociological Study*", with the help of substantial secondary sources along with researcher's observation to comprehend the pros and cons of hostel life.

### IMPACT OF STAYING IN HOSTEL:

Primarily everyone tends to think hostel life means complex environment, overtly stringent wardens, uncomfortable behaviour of fellow roommates and bumpy-pricky beds. While this is the picture always portrayed in movies throughout ages, the reality is pretty different. Women are aware of hostels and they are in dire need of easy, reasonable acquaintance.

Women living in hostel have pointed out a few distinctive changes that their hostels comprise of; positive and negative impact on their life of living in a hostel is listed by the women:

#### A]. POSITIVE IMPACTS:

- **Independence:**

Unlike their homes when women reside in a hostel they learn to be independent and self reliant. Right from managing their career to responsibly managing their bank accounts and other official works. They learn to take decisions on their own without being influenced by anyone. Hostel life teaches them to get accustomed to a new environment and take care of themselves from any kind of threat and they learn tricks and ways to protect themselves. This significantly benefits them lifelong.

- **Interaction and Friendliness:**

All the hostels in India have a mix of women coming from different cities and belong to different cultures. Accordingly hostels serve as a healthy place for bringing together women from different backgrounds and giving them an opportunity to interact with each other, and learn about cultures other than their own. Women tend to be compassionate, caring and more

understanding, when they share their meals, work and life experiences, views and ideas with their hostelites during their leisure time.

- ***A Disciplined Life:***

Hostel life teaches the most important value of a person's life: discipline. They have a way of working; every work has to be done on time and within the fixed time only. For instance, waking up in the morning to having breakfast, lunch and dinner have timings. There are visiting hours and a specific time even for the hostelites to go out and come back to the hostel. Besides teaching women to be independent, hostel life teaches them the importance of orderliness and discipline.

- ***Sharing and Caring:***

Women in the hostel have the most striking attitude of sharing and caring. Right from their opinions to their personal things they don't hesitate from sharing it with their fellow mates. If there is an emergence of any material things like clothing, bedding or even sanitary napkins, they easily find a helping hand in women's hostel.

Celebrating each other's happiness and birthdays, partying is quite common and a joyful moment for most of the women. They enjoy each other's company and plan for outings as well. They even share their sorrows, pains and sometimes the best ideas or suggestions are given by them.

- ***Significant Life Lessons:***

Working women staying in hostels gain unforgettable experiences. It's not less than any adventure which enhances their talent, caliber and teaches them to overcome their own shortcomings and fears. Hostel life also gives them a chance to know people and develop friendships for life. With numerous experiences, hostel women see life and problems through a different perspective. Their outlook changes as well as their attitude. And this phase becomes their memory of a lifetime.

- ***Boosts Confidence:***

Women are confronted with diverse situations and meet all types of people while staying in the hostel. Dealing with different situations and people throughout the year boosts their confidence. Women living in the hostel also tend to get bolder in comparison to those that live in their home and hometown. They truly are better prepared to tackle challenges in their life.

**B]. NEGATIVE IMPACTS:**

- **No Privacy:**

A working women's hostel has a bunch of women living together and sharing one room with one or two women. The experience is similar to having sisters in the house. In such a scenario, one cannot expect privacy, regardless of the time and day. Women here are constantly surrounded by the hostelites and sometimes they have to unwillingly share things. Every tiny detail is noticed by their friends around them in the hostel.

- **Unpleasant Experiences:**

Women have different story to share about their hostel life experiences. Not all are same. Hence, some have pleasant and some have unpleasant experiences. Some have experienced situations like having an incompatible roommate, belongings being stolen, flavorless food, or not able to cope with the norms and timings of hostel; washrooms left unclean or clogged. This may make some of them irritated and thus they cannot adjust with their partners in the hostel. It makes them uncomfortable and vulnerable to their fellow companions.

- **Home Sickness:**

Though women enjoy staying in hostels, they still miss their family. For young mothers it would be difficult to leave their kids/infants back at home and even more difficult to keep their kids with them in the hostel. Unmarried, young women miss their parental care and love. For married young women it's not so easy to stay away from their partners. They sometimes feel embarrassed to share some of their intimate problems or difficulties without any family members nearby. Such problems cannot be shared with friends or colleagues. During such situations they miss their home and family.

- **Introverts May Face Difficulty:**

Introverts are complex in nature and may find it tough to interact with their hostel mates and being friendly with them. They feel left out among others, may even feel inferior and often cry in isolation.

- **Lack of Facilities:**

In today's epoch, technology has reached its peak and we hardly find anyone who does not use internet or are unaware of it. Every student and working class needs internet and technological skill. Some of the hostels don't provide internet facility to their inmates.

As the name itself suggests it is working women hostel, all inmates are employed and hence rarely find time to wash clothes in their busy schedule. Sparing time for laundry is nearly

impossible and they have to either dedicate their only holiday in a week i.e., Sunday for this purpose or, have to do it in the evening after they return from their tiresome day. This in turn deprives them of their relaxation. Majority of the hostels don't provide any laundry facility and inmates have to do it themselves. There is even limitation on the use of electrical appliances, no adequate place to dry clothes and water shortage.

## **DISCUSSION AND SUGGESTIONS:**

The study reveals: globalisation has eventually led to the development of urban cities, thus enormous employment opportunities have emerged. Large number of women migrate in search of job. Most of the women belong to lower and middle income hierarchy. Secure, decent and economical accommodation is the major demand and problem of many women. Such accommodation is provided by hostels. Working women's hostels have been built primarily to cater for the working women who require safe and affordable accommodation.

Hostel life has both pros and cons, everything centers on how women adapt to it. Rules and regulations bind hostel life whereas it's not applicable in home. Home life is more comfortable than a hostel life. But living in a hostel will increase ones overall development of personality. Living in a hostel teaches many other things like teamwork, serving roommates, a sense of harmony and adjustment. In hostel women tend to acquire many good qualities from roommates and other hostellers, and at the same time, they are also vulnerable to the evil influence of the others. The hostels should fulfill the basic need of a home away from home. There's a rapid increase in the number of hostels due to growing migration of women for work. However it is essential that women should be provided with safe and adequate facilities in a hostel.

Provision of sufficient government grants and funds should be released in time, to enable the management to discharge their responsible duties in time. Women organisations demand more active participation. And need for a fresh perspective to re-vamp working women hostel system and make it user-friendly. It can be suggested that, hostel management can discharge their duties promptly and responsibly only if the government funds and grants are released in time. There is a need for fresh perspective to restore the best and friendly hostel atmosphere.

## **CONCLUSION:**

Overall, the inmates do not seem to have any major doubts or complains about the general amenities provided by the hostel. Though they feel the existing facilities can be improved to put them in a better state. Poor hostel facilities can have a bad impact on their health and good facilities can in turn build them strong- mentally, physically, emotionally and economically.



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